

THE
Berkshire Tragedy,
OR, THE
Wittam Miller.

YOUNG men and maidens all give ear,
unto what I shall now relate;
O mark you well, and you shall hear,
Of my unhappy fate.
Near famous Oxford Town,
I first did draw my breath,
Oh! that I had been cast away,
In an untimely birth.
My tender parents brought me up,
Provided for me well,
And in the Town of WITTAM then,
They plac'd me in a mill.
By chance upon an Oxford lass,
I cast a wanton eye,
And promis'd I would marry her,
If she would with me lie.
But to the world I do declare,
With sorrow, grief and woe:
This folly brought us in a snare,
And wrought our overthrow.
But the damsel came to me, and said
By you I am with child;
I hope dear John you'll marry me,
For you have me defil'd.
Soon after that, her mother came,
As you shall understand,
And oftentimes did me persuade
To wed her out of hand.
And thus perplex'd on every side,
I could no comfort find
So to make away this creature,
A Thought came in my mind.
About a month since Christmas last,
On! cursed be the day,
The devil then did me persuade,
To take her life away,
I call'd her from her sisters door,
At eight o'clock at night:

Poor creature she did little dream
I ow'd her any spight.
Told her, if she'd walk with me
Aside a little way:
We both together would agree
About our wedding day,
Thus I deluded her again
Into a private place:
Then took a stick out of the hedge,
And struck her in the face.
But she fell on her bended knee.
And did for mercy cry,
For heaven's sake don't murder me,
I am not fit to die,
But I on her no pity took,
But wounded her full sore,
Until her life away I took,
Which I can ne'er restore.
With many grievous shrieks and cries,
She did resign her breath,
And in inhuman and barbarous sort,
I put my love to death.
And then I took her by the hair,
To cover this foul sin:
And dragg'd her to the river side,
Then threw her body in.
Thus in the blood of innocence,
My hands were deeply dy'd,
And shined in her purple gore,
That should have been my bride,
Then home unto my Mill I ran,
But sorely was amaz'd,
My man he thought I had mischief done,
And strangely on me gaz'd.
Oh! what's the matter then said he?
You look as pale as death:
What makes you shake, and tremble so,
As though you had lost your breath.
How came you by that blood upon
Your trembling hands and cloaths?
I presently to him reply'd,
By bleeding at the nose.
I wishfully upon him look'd,
But little to him said,
But snatch'd the candle from his hand,
And went unto my bed.
Where I lay trembling all the night,
For I could take no rest

And perfect flames of Hell did flash
Within, my guilty face,
Next day the damsel being miss'd,
And no where to be found,
Then I was apprehended soon,
And to the Assizes bound.
Her sister did against me swear,
She reason had no doubt,
That I had made away with her
Because I call'd her out.
But Satan did me still persuade,
I should deny:
Quoth he, there is no witness can
Against thee testify.
Now when her mother did me try,
I scoffingly did say,
On purpose then to frighten her,
She sent her child away.
I publish'd in the Post boy then,
My wickedness to blind,
Five guineas any one should have,
That could her body find.
But Heaven had a watchful eye,
And brought it so about:
That though I stiffly did deny,
This murder would come out.
The very day here, the Assize
Her body it was found,
Floating before her Father's door,
At Hindley Ferry Town,
So! the second time was seiz'd,
To Oxford brought with speed,
And there examined again
About the bloody deed.
Now the Coroner and Jury both
Together did agree,
That this damsel was made away,
And murdered by me.
The Justice too perceiv'd the guilt,
No longer would take bail:
But the next morning I was sent,
Away to Reading Gaol.
When I was brought before the Judge,
My man did testify,
That blood upon my hands and cloaths
That night he did espy.
The Judge he told the Jury then,
The circumstance is plain,

Look on the Prisoner at the bar,
He hath this creature slain.
About the murder at the first
The Jury did divide.
But when they brought their Verdict in,
All of them guilty cry'd,
The Jailor took and bound me strait,
As soon as I was cast:
And then within the Prison strong
He there did lay me fast.
With fetters strong then I was bound.
And shin-belted was I,
Yet the Murder would not own,
But did it still deny.
My Father did on me prevail,
My kindred all likewise,
To own the Murder, which I did,
To them with watery eyes.
My father then he did me blame,
Saying, my Son, oh! why
Have You thus brought yourself to shame,
And all Your Family?
Father, I own the crime I did,
I guilty am indeed,
Which cruel fact I must confess,
Doth make my heart to bleed.
The worst of deaths I do deserve,
My crime it is so base:
For I no mercy shew'd to her,
Most wretched is my case,
Lord grant me grace while I do stay,
That I may now repent:
Before I from this wicked world,
Most shamefully am sent.
Young men take warning by my fall,
And filthy lusts defy;
By giving way to wickedness
Alas! this day I die.
Lord, wash my hateful sins away,
Which have been manifold
Have mercy on me, thee pray,
And Christ receive my soul.